

Maximize Your Membership

10 Hidden Benefits of ALA

BY AMY DVORAK



Welcome (or for many, welcome back) to the Association of Legal Administrators! Another renewal period has ended, leaving many to wonder, “What exactly do I get out of my membership?”

The answer is: **Plenty!** In fact, your ALA membership comes with too many benefits to list here, so we’ve picked 10 hidden gems to share with you. Whether you are new to the Association or need a quick refresher, read on to find out how to maximize your membership and take advantage of all ALA has to offer.

1. ALA MANAGEMENT NETWORK (DISCUSSION FORUMS)

The Association of Legal Administrators’ (ALA) Management Network is your home for the latest ALA news and ongoing member idea and information exchanges. Want to know what fellow legal administrators are saying about direct deposit? Visit the Human Resources Professional Development Network (PDN). Or visit the Technology PDN to drop in on a discussion about the latest billing software. You can post or answer questions or merely browse through the many discussion groups.

“ALA gives you the ability to have instant help, whether it’s through phone, e-mail, or the online forums,” said Glenda Raley, Office Administrator at Ulmer & Berne LLP. “You never know how your contacts will pay off.”

No matter your situation, there are fellow ALA members who have been in your shoes – willing to lend an ear and offer solutions. Visit www.alanet.org/members/network/index.aspx to join in the conversations.

2. ALA CURRENTS

Legal Management and *ALA News* are delivered straight to your mailbox. But what’s this e-newsletter that everyone keeps talking about? It’s called *ALA Currents*, an opt-in e-newsletter that provides legal industry trends, news, and tips from experts and consultants in a concise, easy-to-read format. Unlike the print publications, you have to opt in to receive it. Don’t worry – it’s free! Just go to www.alanet.org/members/currents/default.asp to sign up.

3. MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONSSM

At the click of a mouse, a live expert at ALA is here to help – whether you need to revise your dress code policy, obtain sample documents, or get your hands on resources to complete your next big task. It’s called ALA Management SolutionsSM, or as we like to think of it, having your own personal librarians. So how can you get a hold of these lifesavers? Send your question to infocentral@alanet.org, and you’ll receive a response by



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- **Josh Meeks**, Benefits Manager
MOORE & VAN ALLEN, PLLC

e-mail within 24 to 48 hours. Should you have a hard-to-handle situation or feel as if a phone call is more appropriate, ask for Sue Umbdenstock, Senior Legal Management Information Specialist and Research Librarian, at (847) 267-1252.

“We know what it’s like, having been in law firms,” said Umbdenstock. “It’s like no other place in the world. We’re always here, and we’d love for you to send your questions.”

4. ALA MANAGEMENT CONNECTIONSSM

Although ALA is known as *The Source of Legal Management Information & Knowledge*, did you know that we can help with legal staffing, too? With ALA Management ConnectionsSM, count on cutting your recruiting time – and stress – in half.

“I got unbelievable candidates in a week,” said Shari Tivy, Director of Human Resources at Bowman and Brooke LLP. “With ALA members, you already know what they come with. That in itself pays for membership over and over. It was so painless.”

You can access Management ConnectionsSM at www.alanet.org/jobs/index.html. But why go through ALA for your recruiting needs instead of the major dot-com listings?

“You won’t find quality positions that gear toward legal administration,” said Nicole Larson, ALA’s Executive Assistant and Chapter Relations Coordinator. “Our ad posters call back in a day stating they received good responses from qualified members.”

5. ALA CAREER CENTER

To supplement ALA's successful employer and job seeker Career Center, ALA and Robert Half Legal® have partnered to provide you the best in Career Resources. Here's what you'll find:

- *Career Talk* articles;
- links to career-related materials;
- free resources including a salary guide, a white paper titled "Future Law Office," and a booklet, *Glossary of Job Descriptions*;
- factoids; and
- podcasts.

Visit the Career Center online at www.alanet.org/jobs/careerresources.aspx.

6. LEGAL MANAGEMENT AND ALA NEWS ARCHIVES

Did you read that article on recruiting in the recent issue of *Legal Management*? How about that one a few months back on sustainability? Now you can download articles anytime by visiting the *ALA News* and *Legal Management* archives online. Simply download PDFs of *Legal Management* articles at www.alanet.org/publications/legalmgmtarchives.aspx or access *ALA News* content at www.alanet.org/publications/alaneewsarchives.aspx.

"The *Legal Management* articles help you think outside the box," said John Kirk, CLM, Director of Administration at Manko Gold Katcher & Fox, LLP. "Day-to-day dealings keep you trapped within the parameters of the firm, developing tunnel-vision; the publications push you out a little and give you broader perspective."

7. CLASSIFIED ADS

Just like the classified ads in your local newspaper, ALA members can find and post ads for items such as office space, furnishings, vacation properties, collectibles, memorabilia, computer equipment, business services, and much more. Ads are immediately activated and run for 90 days. Log in to the Members Only section of the ALA web site at www.alanet.org and go to Classified Ads.

8. PEER CONSULTING

Among many benefits of ALA membership is the opportunity to network with other legal administrators for ideas and advice. The Peer Consulting Directory contains the names of ALA members who have volunteered to serve as contacts for other members on various legal management topics. The Peer Consulting electronic database puts you in touch with over 1,000 active administrators worldwide who are experienced in hundreds

of areas of legal management and ready to assist you with your pressing management issues.

"It can be very intimidating and scary, but let go of the fear that you don't know an answer, lack skills, or are hesitant to call a fellow ALA member," said Donnell Kisa, Office Administrator, Shughart Thomson & Kilroy, PC. "We are all intelligent, solid, well-rounded individuals, and there is nothing wrong with sharing a weakness and letting others know you need help."

To search for an expert, visit <http://thesource.alanet.org> and click on the Peer Consulting tab.

9. ALA VALUE IN PARTNERSHIP (VIP)SM PROGRAM

ALA membership comes with not only professional benefits, but personal benefits, too. Be sure to check out the ALA Value in Partnership (VIP)SM Program, where ALA members, their employers, and their families can enjoy savings from office supplies stores, shipping services, and even insurance programs. Check out your benefits and discounts at www.alanet.org/members/prog.aspx.

10. ALA LEGAL MANAGEMENT RESOURCE CENTER (LMRC)

Think of the LMRC as a free, digital library for legal administrators. Just visit the Web site and type in your research topic (i.e. "dress codes" or "mentoring programs"). You can instantly view articles from associations, consulting firms, and government agencies, as well as ALA sources on associate development, training, and retention.

"So many people are not aware of ALA's resources, like the LMRC," said Kisa. "It's so easy to use!"

It's hard to believe, but these 10 benefits are merely a sampling of what ALA has to offer its members. So if you need to, start small. Visit the Web site once a week, try to use something new, read something you haven't read before, or talk to a member you've never met.

"Keep your opportunities open," said Josh Meeks, Benefits Manager, Moore & Van Allen, PLLC. "There's so much ALA offers, so take a look and see what fits your needs. Don't limit yourself; take it all in." ♦